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TECHNOLOGY AND THE WAY: BUBER, HEIDEGGER, AND LAO-ZHUANG “DAOISM”

ABSTRACT

I consider the intertextuality between Chinese and Western thought by exploring how images, metaphors, and ideas from the texts associated with Zhuangzi and Laozi were appropriated in early twentieth-century German philosophy. This interest in “Lao-Zhuang Daoism” encompasses a diverse range of thinkers including Buber and Heidegger. I examine (1) how the problematization of utility, usefulness, and “purposiveness” in Zhuangzi and Laozi becomes a key point for their German philosophical reception; (2) how it is the poetic character of the *Zhuangzi* that hints at an appropriate response to the crisis and loss of meaning that characterizes technological modernity and its instrumental technological rationality; that is, how the “poetic” and “spiritual” world perceived in Lao-Zhuang thought became part of Buber’s and Heidegger’s critical encounter and confrontation with technological modernity; and (3) how their concern with Zhuangzi does not signify a return to a dogmatic religiosity or otherworldly mysticism; it anticipates a this-worldly spiritual (Buber) or poetic (Heidegger) way of dwelling immanently within the world.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE PERILS OF INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY

Comparative intercultural philosophy continues to face deep skepticism, despite centuries of engagement and dialogue between philosophies of diverse provenance. In the contexts of German and Chinese philosophy, a number of significant modern German thinkers from Leibniz to Martin Buber and Martin Heidegger have engaged Chinese thought with varying degrees of seriousness at the same time as German philosophers such as Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Marx, and Heidegger have become an established part of the modern Chinese intellectual context.

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Any cursory glance at the philosophy section of German and Chinese bookstores shows an abundance of translations. There is intellectual exchange, but the question lingers whether there is mutual understanding. The suspicion remains that a comparative or cross-cultural encounter is bound to miss the essential of one discourse or the other. Even in an age suspicious of essentialism, there is hesitation concerning whether Westerners can grasp the genuine meaning of Chinese classics, just as Chinese intellectuals have fashioned their own understandings and interpretations of European thought.

On the one hand, if the interpretive measure of meaning requires the reader to comprehend the real intentions of the author, or the author in her or his full context, then there has never been a European encounter with a classical Chinese text such as the *Zhuangzi* 《莊子》 or—for that matter—perhaps not yet even a Chinese encounter. There has in this case never been a genuine reception of Chinese philosophy in German philosophy, since all these readings from Leibniz and Wolff to Buber and Heidegger are based on more or less on their own presuppositions, inadequate translations, and a lack of familiarity with the cultural context and language in which these texts were initially composed and transmitted. If such a hermeneutical measure is too stringent, since it makes understanding others virtually impossible, an opposite one would be too lax. Since, on the other hand, both scholarly experts and the actual practitioners of a tradition will appropriately demand some standard to distinguish genuine expert readings from superficial external impositions and anachronistic or ideologically driven appropriations foisted onto a text by popular audiences and philosophers from different cultural contexts.

Comparative or intercultural philosophy seems captured in a dilemma between rigorous but potentially narrow expertise and free and open but potentially ill-informed communication. The question of the possibility of a genuinely intercultural philosophizing is of pressing concern in the context of this paper since I wish to speak of two early twentieth-century German philosophers (1) who used images and strategies from the *Daodejing* 《道德經》 and the *Zhuangzi* 《莊子》 and (2) whose thinking could be said to be informed by them to the extent that it is possible to be influenced by texts read in translation and through the mediation of a different historical and cultural nexus.

One instance of East-West philosophical interaction is evident in German philosophical reflections about the interconnections and tensions between technology, spirituality, and poetry in the modern world. In this article, I consider one example of such intertextuality between Chinese and Western thought by exploring how images, metaphors, and ideas from the text associated with the *Zhuangzi* were taken up in early twentieth-century German philosophy. This interest

in the *Zhuangzi* encompasses a diverse range of thinkers such as Buber, Heidegger, and Georg Misch. One task of this paper is to address the issue of historical influence, if not directly the relative accuracy or inaccuracy of their readings, and the second to address the philosophical issue of the fate of humanity in the age of technology and, remarkably, how the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi* became part of the twentieth-century German philosophical debate about the modern scientific and technological worldview and how to respond to it in the profoundly different philosophies of Buber and Heidegger.²

II. THE HASIDIC *Zhuangzi*

Heidegger's familiarity with the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi* in German translation has been frequently noted. Heidegger is reported to have repeatedly read Buber's 1910 edition of selections from the *Zhuangzi*, *Reden und Gleichnisse des Tschuang Tse*, which Buber translated from the English translations of James Legge and Herbert Allen Giles into German and published with Insel Verlag in 1910.³

There has been much discussion of the few passages where Heidegger evokes early Lao-Zhuang Daoist images and ideas. Little attention has, however, been devoted to how Heidegger's brief allusions to and employments of Daoist ideas, images, and metaphors might be shaped by his sources.⁴ There is good reason to reconsider this context for both historical and philosophical reasons.

First, Buber's edition of the *Zhuangzi* cannot in any way be understood as a neutral medium for presenting the *Zhuangzi* text to German readers. It intentionally and selectively focuses on the poetic and narrative presentation of ideas in the *Zhuangzi*. Second, Buber's edition contains a long afterword that makes his interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* explicit. There he develops the continuity and the transformation of the "teaching of the way" (*die Lehre des Weges*) (*dao* 道) into what he considers its fullest actualization in *Zhuangzi*.

Unlike the more monistic, elemental, mystical, and anti-linguistic presentation of the teaching of the *dao* that Buber sees in Laozi 老子, the teaching of the way is enacted through a more indirect, playful, and poetic dialogical language. What appears inhuman and monstrous in the *Daodejing* appears more human in the *Zhuangzi*. The teaching of the way is realized more communicatively in and through language and thus more genuinely and fully.

Buber's visualization of *Zhuangzi* is of a sage who resembles in certain respects the Hasidic rabbis and masters of whom Buber wrote in this period. The young Buber emerged as an early scholar and interpreter of Hasidism, a movement in Eastern European

Judaism that focused on the piety and spirituality of ordinary people and the immanence of the divine in everyday life. Hassidim or Chasidim (חסידות) signifies “piety” or “loving kindness” in Hebrew, and indicates for Buber a spiritual feeling of life and way of living within the world. This means in Buber’s interpretation of the Hasidic encounter with and experience of the divine that God—similar to his vision of the *dao*—is internal to or “immanent within the world,” “and is brought to perfection” through human life in the world as the co-creation of the world.⁵

Buber’s earliest works are primarily translations and interpretations of Hasidic and Chinese sources. Buber’s edition of *Chinesische Geister- und Liebesgeschichten* (*Chinese Ghost and Love Stories*) published in 1911 is a translation from English into German of a collection of stories drawn from the *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (*Liaozhai Zhiyi* 《聊齋誌異》) of Pu Songling 蒲松齡.⁶ These strange stories of seductive fox sprits, angry ghosts, Confucian scholars, Buddhist monks, and religious Daoist exorcists reveal aspects of the *dao* refracted through the popular imagination akin to the Hasidic storyteller. The Hasidic master is the Eastern European teacher of Judaism who teaches the spiritual through evocatively enacting and living the symbolic in story, song, and poetry.

In the exemplary cases of Chinese and Hasidic teaching (*lehren*), parable teaches more primordially than doctrine and theory: “The parable is the engagement of the absolute into the world of things.”⁷ The poetic and narrative enactment of the teaching is more fundamental than its doctrinal and theoretical presentations or its being hidden in silence and ineffable; silence is only the condition of the word, as the communication of the teaching is the teaching itself. Analogous to the Hasidic narrators of Yiddish tales of the golem, the wandering Jew, magic-wielding rabbis who protect the community from a hostile world, the dybbuk or malevolent lost soul who possesses the young and the innocent, shape-shifting and talking beasts, and tales of gilgul or reincarnated souls, popular Chinese tales such as those of Pu Songling communicate the uncanny sensibility through the evocative image and the affective word.

Buber’s Zhuangzi teaches through surprising dialogical reversals, strange and unusual stories of humans, animals, and spirits, and most importantly through humor and laughter. The affective and noncognitive dimension proves to be a more fundamental way of addressing and shifting the mood, the ethos, and way of living of the listener. Reversing typical criticisms of the *Zhuangzi* as an escape and withdrawal from the world, Buber’s *Zhuangzi* fulfills the teaching of the *dao* by playfully returning it to the images and words of ordinary life with a free and easy attitude within that life. Buber’s contrasts Zhuangzi’s

immanent liberation within the world with the seriousness and almost inhuman endorsement of silence expressed in the *Daodejing*, which by the 1920's replaced the *Zhuangzi* as his preferred Daoist text.

Each Lao-Zhuang Daoist text responds to what is "needful" in human existence.⁸ The needful can only be realized in the wholeness of this worldly life; that is, in the "central life" and "truthful life" of the *zhenren* 真人.⁹ Friedman describes Buber's version of the genuine or perfected person (*zhenren*) as the one who harmonizes the greatest transformations with the fullest unity.¹⁰ In a description that captures an element of Judaism as well as Daoism, Buber concludes that to be one with the *dao* is to constantly renew creation and life in the everyday and ordinary.¹¹ In this sense, Daoism is not the anti-ethical or nihilistic philosophy that some modern proponents and critics conceive it as. It is an ethical teaching of the good that through its notion of noncoercive responsive doing (*wuwei* 無爲), as noninterfering and nonharming the life of others, warns against separation from and destruction of creation.¹² Buber's *Zhuangzi* suggests a more fundamental teaching than the flights and fancies of otherworldly mysticism, as this genuine unity is achievable only immanently in the midst of the dynamic changes of life and nature.¹³

This point indicates how *Zhuangzi* transformed and perfected Laozi's teaching of the way in Buber's early interpretation. The *Daodejing* responds to the needful in terms of a silent contemplation of a unitary mystical unity. It is the elemental, yet not the fulfilled. It is a life of solitude and concealment in which Laozi does not talk with others but only with and to concealment itself. In contrast to the hiddenness and consequent incompleteness of the teaching of Laozi, the *Zhuangzi* fulfills the needful within everyday ordinary existence through the more dynamic, playful, and transformative oneness in multiplicity that can be taught only in the complete speech of parable. The non-monistic playing of oneness in multiplicity and difference in the one is Buber's gloss on the music or panpipes of heaven. Here, the oneness of the world is at the same time the oneness of each singular thing that can only be considered "from out of itself." The way is not distinct from each thing in which it is enacted: "each thing manifests *dao* through the way of its existence, through its life."¹⁴

The "love of things" and love of the world articulated in the *dao*-teaching embraces and nourishes life (*yangsheng*) in each thing and releases things through "nondoing" (*wuwei*). Typically, the Jewish and Chinese understandings of the world are seen as opposites; according to Hall and Ames, for instance, one accentuates otherworldly divine transcendence and the other this-worldly natural immanence.¹⁵ In contrast, Buber perceives in both Hasidic Judaism and Lao-Zhuang Daoism tendencies toward the humanistic

actualization of the transcendent in the immanent, of the sacred in the mundane, in everyday life through exemplary figures and genuine teachers who teach the needful and the authentic life.

In this Jewish-Chinese comparative context, Buber speaks of the Daoist genuine person (*zhenren*) as renewing and perfecting creation in “surrendering.” The human being in Judaism and Daoism is a necessary co-creator of the world for Buber. Despite antihumanistic elucidations of early Daoism, the role of the human in the balance of nature and in nourishing life is articulated in the sixth chapter of the *Zhuangzi* (*Dazongshi* 大宗師). It is precisely the genuine person who adeptly bridges and nourishes the natural and the human: “When neither heaven nor humanity wins over the other, this is called being a genuine person (*zhenren*).”¹⁶

For Buber, Daoism is not an indifferent resignation or unresponsive passivity: renouncing violence against things, as is distinctive of modern Western technological civilization, *wuwei* “helps all beings to their freedom” and “redeems them out of the slavery of violence and machinery.”¹⁷ Buber’s language of a noncoercive surrendering, letting, and noncoercive responsive doing anticipated and perhaps influenced Heidegger’s way of speaking.¹⁸

III. DAOIST *WUWEI* AS A RESPONSE TO TECHNOLOGICAL MODERNITY?

Buber returned to the theme of the burdens of modern science and technology in “China and Us,” a lecture first delivered at a conference held at the China Institute in Frankfurt in 1928. In his reflection on the question of whether ancient Chinese wisdom offers a genuine attainable alternative for modern European civilization, he argued for the impossibility of Europeans escaping the weight of technological modernity. There is according to Buber no “going back behind all this industrializing and technicizing and mechanizing,” because without technological modernity European civilization would lose its specific *dao*: “we” modern Europeans “would no longer proceed on the way at all; we would, in general no longer have a way.”¹⁹

Buber contends that modern Europeans cannot escape technology and science, nor should they desire to abandon these as they have become integral to the path itself as it has been undertaken and, of course, provide much for the improvement of our physical and intellectual existence. Nevertheless, Buber perceives a modern civilization deep in chaos and crisis. This Europe, one infected by irrationality and tempted by power and strong “leaders,” is in need of hearing an elemental teaching from China. Europeans, he argues, need to learn

something to temper and contest the relentless drive for instrumental power over things found in modern Western science and society.

Buber maintained in “China and Us” that it is difficult to imagine any experience that can challenge the modern conception of life as the exercise of the will to power and a relentless struggle for existence. Yet, another path is indeed indicated in the writings of Laozi and Zhuangzi. Daoist “nondoing,” which Buber interprets as a noncoercive and responsive doing, is the key experience and conception that Europe can learn from China in order to temper its thirst for power and domination over things and over others.²⁰ *Wuwei* can teach a humanity consumed by technological and historical success that such success comes with heavy costs in human suffering.²¹ Inspired by his encounter with Laozi and Zhuangzi, Buber concluded that success can be the loss of what is genuinely human and nonsuccess can be its genuine realization:

I believe that we can receive from China in a living manner something of the Daoist teaching of ‘non-action,’ the teaching of Laozi. And for the reason that bearing our burden on our way we have learned something analogous, only negatively on the reverse side, so to speak. We have begun to learn, namely, that success is of no consequence. We have begun to doubt the significance of historical success, i.e. the validity of the man who sets an end for himself, carries this end into effect, accumulates the necessary means of power and succeeds with these means of power: the typical modern Western man. I say, we begin to doubt the content of existence of this man.

It is in this locus that an encounter between Chinese wisdom and European reality becomes possible and necessary. This encounter and learning experience cannot occur through Confucian philosophy, which Buber argued is (1) too morally idealistic for modern European sensibilities absorbed by the quest for power and success, (2) impossible to realize in a European context because Confucian ethics presupposes a particular culturally rooted understanding of family relations and relationships between the living and the dead that is lacking in the West, and, finally, (3) inadequate to the fundamental problematic of modern European civilization: the restless drive for power, progress, and accumulation.

What is needful in the modern Western context is precisely a revolutionary teaching that pulls the egotistical yet fractured and dispersed modern self out of its absorption in frantic activities, ravenous consumption, and its compulsive obsession for success. The transformative teaching that addresses the need of modern humanity would allow the self to be with itself as well as with others and the myriad things with which it interacts. This is the “deeply Chinese” understanding of the way taught in the books of Laozi and Zhuangzi:

And there we come into contact with something genuine and deeply Chinese, though not, to be sure, Confucian: with the teaching that genuine effecting is not interfering, not giving vent to power, but remaining within one's self. This is the powerful existence that does not yield historical success, i.e. the success that can be exploited and registered in this hour, but only yields that effecting that at first appears insignificant, indeed invisible, yet endures across generations and there at times becomes perceptible in another form. At the core of each historical success hides the turning away from what the man who accomplished it really had in mind. Not realization, but the hidden non-realization that has been disguised or masked just through success is the essence of historical success.

A different vision of living and nourishing human life is revealed in early Lao-Zhuang Daoist texts. Buber considered these sources to be the opposite of and to indicate a significant correction to the compulsive drive for and the instrumental calculation of success:

Opposed to it stands the changing of men that takes place in the absence of success, the changing of men through the fact that one effects without interfering. It is ... in the commencing knowledge of this action without doing, action through non-action, of this powerfulness of existence, that we can have contact with the great wisdom of China.

Buber concludes his discussion of this passage by noting how it is suffering and foolishness, and with an uncanny foreboding of the pending disaster that would soon swallow Europe and the world with National Socialism and World War II, which has brought Europe on the verge of its own self-produced abyss and the need to discover for itself Laozi's teaching of *wuwei*:

With us this knowledge does not originate as wisdom but as foolishness. We have obtained a taste of it in the bitterest manner; indeed, in a downright foolish manner. But there where we stand or there where we shall soon stand, we shall directly touch upon the reality for which Laozi spoke.²²

It should be noted that, despite his reservations about its mysticism, Buber's discussions of Daoism in the 1920s and afterward focus on the *Daodejing* instead of the *Zhuangzi*. The mature Buber was particularly interested in its political dimension, including his translation of chapters of Laozi on politics into Hebrew.²³

IV. HEIDEGGER, TECHNIQUE, AND THE WAY

There is ample evidence of Heidegger's familiarity with the *Zhuangzi*, although the majority of his discussions of Lao-Zhuang Daoism refer to the *Daodejing* and only a few directly to the *Zhuangzi*.²⁴ Heidegger knew of Martin Buber's 1910 edition of the *Zhuangzi* fairly early,

probably in the 1920's. It is reported that he read aloud and discussed the exchange between Zhuangzi and Huizi 惠子 concerning whether humans can understand the enjoyment of fish from Chapter 17 (*Qiushui* 秋水) of the *Zhuangzi*. Heidegger illustrated his own conception of *Mitsein* (being-with) of human *Dasein* (being-there) through Zhuangzi's playful evocation of the perspective of fish.²⁵

Heidegger's continuing interest in Zhuangzi is indicated by his reading of the "simile of the carillon stand" from chapter 19 of the *Zhuangzi* in a discussion of metaphor, image, and language around thirty years later.²⁶ In this chapter on "Fulfilling Life" (*Dasheng* 达生), a noninstrumental artistry is an image of how to live; the wooden bell stand (*Glockenspiel-stände*) appears as if it were the work of spirits and is formed through a responsive artistry that is born of the fasting of the heart-mind (*xin* 心) and arises without technique, skill, expectation, or calculation.

A third example occurs in the context of Heidegger's postwar thinking in a dialogue between an older and younger prisoner of war concerning "letting come" as waiting in contrast with calculative expectation and learning and as coming to know the needful instead of the accumulation of information or technical skills. In his *Country Path Conversations* of 1994-1995, Heidegger recounted the conversation between Zhuangzi and Huizi concerning "the necessity of the unnecessary."²⁷ The "uses of the useless" in chapter 26 of the *Zhuangzi* (*Waiwu* 外物) signals an alternative to the restless accumulation, consumption, and reduction of thinking to calculation that is distinctive of technological modernity. This point is elaborated by Heidegger in his quotation of the story of the "useless tree" from Richard Wilhelm's translation of chapter 1 of the *Zhuangzi* (*Xiaoyaoyou* 逍遥游) in a discussion of traditional and technical language in 1962.²⁸

The liberation of the unnecessary and the useless revealed in the *Zhuangzi* clarifies the orienting claim of this conversation: "the fact that the unnecessary remains at all times the most necessary of all."²⁹ In a discussion that resonates with the early Daoist concern with "nourishing life" (*Yangsheng* 養生) through a noncoercive letting, the unnecessary is contrasted with the relentless necessity of goals and purposes that has furthered the impoverishment of life under the guise of securing and improving human life.³⁰ The calculative reduction and exploitation of things leads to the impoverishment of one's own life for Heidegger. The older man in Heidegger's dialogue described how humans fail to "let things be in their restful repose (*ruhe*)"; humans, he claimed, instead reify things as "objects by setting them toward themselves."³¹ The younger man in response compares this restless pursuit of things that forces itself upon them and transforms things "into mere resources for his needs and items in his calculations, and into mere opportunities for advancing and maintaining his manipulations."³²

The coercion and compulsion of the necessary has led to “devastation” and desertification (*Verwüstung*); that is to say, according to Heidegger, it is “the process of the desolation of the earth and of human existence.”³³ The unnecessary appears all too lacking in necessity and purpose from a calculative point of view; yet the freedom of “being able to let (*Lassenkönnen*)” is the dimension where healing occurs.³⁴ A primary characteristic of Heidegger’s later philosophy is how to expose and open oneself to this healing power of life and the holy (*heilig*) that he identified with the dimension of healing (*heil*), which has increasingly become alien and invisible in technologically determined life, through a calm letting releasement (*Gelassenheit*) that frees the self through liberating things.

Heidegger elsewhere articulated the openness of being (*Sein*) in relation to his conception of nothingness and emptiness. As in Lao-Zhuang Daoism, these are not merely negative or privative concepts. Since Heidegger drew on images of emptiness and the way from the *Daodejing*, it is apparent that Heidegger was familiar with it in German translation. Moreover, Paul Shih-yi Hsiao (Xiao Shiyi 蕭師毅) described how, as a visiting scholar in Freiburg after the end of World War II, he and Heidegger engaged in conversations concerning the *Daodejing* and translated sections.³⁵

In a number of places, Heidegger specifically attended to the “emptiness” articulated in the *Daodejing*. He interpreted the emptiness of the empty space of the spoke, the vessel, and the house in chapter eleven as indicative of the ontological difference between beings (*Seiende*) and being (*Sein*). The last sentence <*Gu youzhi yiweili, wuzhi yiweiyong*. 故有之以爲利，無之以爲用.> is translated: “beings result in usability” and “non-being grants being.”³⁶ It is the perspective of being (*Sein*) gained through the encounter with emptiness (*das Leere*) that liberates beings from their bondage in use and consumption.

In another passage, Heidegger depicted the emptiness of Laozi’s “empty vessel” as the condition of the vessel’s holding:

[W]hat is impermeable is not yet what does the holding. When we fill the jug, the pouring that fills it flows into the empty jug. The emptiness, the void, is what does the vessel’s holding. The empty space, this nothing of the jug, is what the jug is as the holding vessel.³⁷

The “thingliness of the thing” does not consist of matter but in the empty that holds. Heidegger envisions the holding through the empty as the possibility of the gift of outpouring; such nourishing generosity of water and wine, of sun and earth, marks the crossing of the “between” in the marriage of heaven and earth:

Even the empty jug retains its nature by virtue of the poured gift, even though the empty jug does not admit of a giving out. But this

nonadmission belongs to the jug and to it alone.... In the water of the spring dwells the marriage of sky and earth. It stays in the wine given by the fruit of the vine, the fruit in which the earth's nourishment and the sky's sun are betrothed to one another. In the gift of water, in the gift of wine, sky and earth dwell. But the gift of the outpouring is what makes the jug a jug. In the jugness of the jug, sky and earth dwell.³⁸

Heidegger's discussion of Laozi's empty vessel in the context of "sky and earth" evokes the Chinese conception of heaven and earth (*tiandi* 天地). Sky and earth along with mortals and immortals constitutes what Heidegger called the "fourfold" (*Geviert*). It is a poetic description of reality that contrasts a finite human existence within the broader openness of the world with the loss of such openness in the forgetting of being and the leveling of beings, including the human being, as objects of technical mastery.

Heidegger portrayed his own thought as a thinking of paths and ways illustrated by images of winding forest ways and contemplative country paths. As such, Heidegger's way (*Weg*) has been linked with the *dao* and he himself addressed the *dao*. In a number of passages, Heidegger mentioned the untranslatability of "basic words" such as *logos* and *dao*. He also ventured to say more about "way" as an originary or world-disclosing word in *Underway to Language*:

Perhaps the word "way" is a primordial word of language that speaks to human reflection. The leading word in the poetic thinking of Laozi is *dao* that 'properly' signifies way. But because one easily thinks of 'way' only externally, as a stretch linking two places, our word "way" has too hastily been found inappropriate to name what *dao* says. One therefore translates *dao* as reason, spirit, *raison*, sense, *logos*.³⁹

Heidegger continued this passage by considering whether *dao*, as a primordial disclosive word that usually and for the most part lies concealed in its unsaid, might be—to adopt an expression from his early thought—formally indicative; that is, a way that potentially points toward all ways:

However, *dao* could be the way that moves all ways, the very source of our ability to think what reason, spirit, sense, *logos* properly, that is, from their own essence, would like to say. Perhaps the secret of all secrets of thoughtful saying conceals itself in the word 'way,' *dao*, if we let these names return into their unsaid, and are capable of this letting ... All is way.⁴⁰

V. TECHNOLOGY AND THE *DAO*: BUBER, HEIDEGGER, AND ZHUANGZI

A number of moments in Heidegger that have been associated with Lao-Zhuang Daoism in the rich and diverse secondary literature on

Heidegger and East Asian philosophy—such as the letting releasement of things in poetic dwelling in contrast with the technological domination of things as mere objects of use; the uselessness that places conventional conceptions of instrumental usefulness and purposiveness into question—have their counterparts in Buber’s early humanistic and personalistic interpretation of Zhuangzi as a poet of the liberation of humans and things in response to what is needful in existence and its healing power. In the same way, Heidegger’s identification of technology with the essence of modern Western civilization, which he interpreted as the culmination of the unique metaphysical history of being in the West, has its equivalent in Buber’s critique of modern technological society and the ongoing depersonalization of human life. Such dehumanizing objectification occurs for Buber through the illegitimate overextension of the impersonal I-it relationship. It has reduced even our sense of community and social hope to technical planning:

Under the influence of pantechanical trends Utopia too has become wholly technical; conscious human will, its foundation hitherto, is now understood as technics, and society like Nature is to be mastered by technological calculation and construction.⁴¹

A significant difference remains between Buber and Heidegger. Whereas Heidegger drew on the more abstract quasi-metaphysical imagery of empty vessels and empty spokes from the *Daodejing* and the what he construes to be the uselessness of the distinction between the useful and the useless from the *Zhuangzi*, the early Buber embraced the *Zhuangzi*’s bestiary of animals and the concrete images of natural phenomena. While Heidegger posited an “abyss” between the human and the animal, we see a continuity, mutuality, and reversibility of the human and the animal in the stories and parables of Zhuangzi and Buber where the human can be suddenly perceived from a nonhuman perspective in order to illumine what is genuine in human life.

In stories of talking trees and animals, metaphor and parable are more primary in teaching the truthful life than the cognitive or theoretically formulated principles demanded by the modern scientific and technological worldview. As one of Buber’s Berlin teachers Wilhelm Dilthey stressed, the poetic is more expressive, evocative, and transformative of the fundamental moods and dispositions of life than metaphysical systems or theoretical discourses.

Buber’s language of the needful, of the poetic, and the priority of the noncognitive teaching of the way that realizes transformational transcendence in the midst of the immanence of everyday life suggests one way of contextualizing and complicating interpretations of the role of Daoist *wuwei* and *ziran* 自然 in Heidegger’s writings.

Heidegger noted in the *Letter on Humanism* that “We are still far from pondering the essence of action decisively enough.”⁴² Against the activism and the striving and struggling of the conatus, subject, and will to power of the Western metaphysical tradition, Heidegger calls for the essence of action to be thought from the dimension of letting release-ment (*Gelassenheit*) and powerlessness (*Unmacht*) that resonates with and is no doubt in part informed by Heidegger’s acquaintance and fascination with the texts of Laozi and Zhuangzi. Moreover, this letting-be (*lassen*) and releasing into the openness of being serves as the basis of Heidegger’s response to technological modernity that he identified with the enframing (*Ge-stell*) of things. Enframing is the narrowing of the world to one impoverished world-picture or perspective. It promotes the calculability, producibility, and ordering (*Machen-schaft*) of things as it coercively and reductively transforms things into mere objects of standing reserve (*Be-stand*) or bare “resources.” Even the human becomes another standing resource to be exploited among others.

What then is the significance of the *Zhuangzi* and of Buber and Heidegger’s interpretation of Lao-Zhuang Daoism for addressing our current condition and plight; that is, the condition of modernity and the preeminence of science and technology that for Buber and Heidegger—to various degrees—has led to the increasing calculative organization and impersonal neutralization of reality and human life?

We can sketch out some initial conclusions at this point. First, there is an apparent problematization of conventional notions of utility, usefulness, and “purposiveness” in the *Zhuangzi*. The reversal of perspective that throws the dominant conception of the useful and purposeful into question became a key point in the German philosophical reception of *Zhuangzi*. This historical process linked an ancient Chinese text with modern life-philosophical and existential tendencies in German philosophy that continue to resonate today in western philosophers who interpret *Zhuangzi* as an irrationalist or as a countercultural rebel against the discipline of conventional social life.

Second, it is precisely the skeptical questioning seen in the *Zhuangzi* as well as its emancipatory poetic and spiritual character that offered European thinkers such as Buber and Heidegger hints at an appropriate response to the crisis of modernity. European philosophy and literature since the nineteenth-century has been concerned with the loss of meaning and purpose that is understood as typical of modernity. Beginning with the German sociologist Max Weber, modernity has been associated with the “disenchantment of the world” and the universalization of instrumental means-oriented rationality in which the calculation of means “no longer need to be justified by any ends.”⁴³ This narrowed conception of rationality has been identified with the dominance of technological rationality that reduces all ends

to means and turns all the myriad things into objects of use and exploitation. In contrast to the calculative exploitation of things, Buber and Heidegger found a “poetic spirituality” resistant to reductive purposiveness in the useless trees and disfigured bodies of the *Zhuangzi*. Zhuangzi consequently became part of Buber’s and Heidegger’s critical encounter and confrontation with modernity and its determination by technology, science, and its instrumental calculative rationality.

Third, the *Zhuangzi* provided these two German philosophers with a model of spiritual freedom that did not signify a return to a dogmatic religiosity or monistic mysticism, which they each rejected. The *Zhuangzi* instead is conceived as a poetic way of opening up the world in order to dwell immanently and playfully in the world. This free and easy wandering with the myriad things promises to liberate and release one’s own self and things, allowing each to be itself as it is, in contrast with a modern European culture that produced the egotistical domination of things in the name of a freedom and happiness of an isolated atomistic individual self.

Two further points should be made about the *Zhuangzi* in the context of the philosophies of Buber and Heidegger. Fourth, in the case of Buber, the *Zhuangzi* text indicates a dialogical and communicatively-mediated spirituality to be distinguished from the monistic, elemental, and anti-linguistic incarnation of the teaching that the early Buber associated with the figure of Laozi. By philosophizing through words, similes, and parables, Zhuangzi brings the teaching of the *dao* back to ordinary life in a way that for Buber parallels the Hasidic storytellers of Eastern Europe. Buber would interpret Heidegger’s philosophy as being closer to Laozi than Zhuangzi, as he critiqued Heidegger as worshipping a stern inhuman silence and an isolated solitude that allows for a formalized “solicitude” (*Fürsorge*) without a genuine Thou (*Du*) or concrete other.⁴⁴ Buber’s depiction of the questionability of concealment, darkness, and silence in Laozi and Heidegger is, as if in response, placed in question in Heidegger’s remark:

Laozi says, “Whoever knows its brightness, cloaks himself in its darkness.” We add to this the truth that everyone knows, but few realize: Mortal thinking must let itself down into the dark depths of the well if it is to see the stars by day.⁴⁵

Fifth, in Buber’s portrayals of examples drawn from Daoist and Hasidic sources, the poetic affective word has priority over the cognitive proposition in authentic teaching. This is a focus that is evident in Heidegger’s articulation of the primacy of the affective dimension of human existence in mood and attunement. Still, Buber is much more moderate in his conclusions than Heidegger. The priority of the affective leads Buber to contextualize rationality and warn against the

danger of rejecting reason. Nor does it entail the radical rejection or negation of science, technology, and the neutralizing objectifying perspective that it presupposes. These are dangers that Buber perceived in Heidegger's way of thinking. Buber maintains that the priority of the personal means instead to revive the human while not fleeing from the machine by placing science and technology (and the impersonal perspective of the "it") in the wider dialogical and interpersonal contexts of (1) the basic world-disclosing and orienting encounter between I and Thou (*ich und Du*) and (2) human life through the free use of the imagination in stories, parables, and wonders. This is a task that Buber attempted in his own edition and interpretation of the *Zhuangzi*.

VI. ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE OR MUTUAL DIALOGUE? THE CASE OF ZEN BUDDHISM

A further point deserves more extensive discussion on its own. Buber explicitly states that the West is in need of learning from the East. In particular, the Daoist notion of "nondoing" presents an alternative vision to the restless activism and consumption of modern technological civilization. But what kind of learning is called for here in the claim that the West should learn from the East? Does it mean that one must adopt a Daoist or other Eastern philosophy? Can the sensibility revealed in Daoist and Zen Buddhist sources help answer the problem of technological modernity posed by Buber and Heidegger? Such questions find further clarification in the references to Zen Buddhism that Buber and Heidegger made in the 1950s and 1960s. Buber called for a dialogue with and learning from Zen Buddhism in the postwar years, which he elucidated in the context of Hasidic Judaism and Daoism: "In many formulations of Zen we can see the influence of Daoistic teaching, that truth is above antithetics."⁴⁶ In addition to identifying a specific kind of anticonceptual dialectic at play in both Daoism and Zen, Buber clarified the skeptical understanding of reality as dream in Zen through Zhuangzi's dream of the butterfly.⁴⁷

Daoism and Zen are not really differentiated in Buber and Heidegger's remarks. Their comments shed more light on the the affinities and distances between Heidegger and Buber: Heidegger focused on experiences of the way, emptiness, the gathering of heaven and earth, and responsive letting be, and Buber emphasized the paradox, the image, and the teaching in narrative language as well as in the dialogical encounter and learning between I and Thou in Daoist and Zen Buddhist sources.

Despite Heidegger's attention to and appropriation of Daoist and Zen Buddhist texts and their language, he ultimately remained

skeptical of whether the West could in fact learn from the East. In fact, Heidegger emphasized the necessity of the West confronting its own origin and destiny (what he earlier called “the first beginning”) in order to respond to the reductive technological enframing of the world (and disclose “the other beginning” concealed in the first):

I am convinced that a change can only be prepared from the same place in the world where the modern technological world originated. It cannot come about by the adoption of Zen Buddhism or other Eastern experiences of the world. The help of the European tradition and a new appropriation of that tradition are needed for a change in thinking. Thinking will only be transformed by a thinking that has the same origin and destiny. [Western technological modernity] must be superseded (*aufgehoben*) in the Hegelian sense, not removed, superseded, but not by human beings alone.⁴⁸

To contextualize Heidegger’s statement, it should be noted that other German-language thinkers of the postwar era such as Theodor Adorno and Buber expressed anxieties about Eastern influences and, in particular, a facile Western adaptation of Zen Buddhism. Adorno, the critical social theorist of the Frankfurt school, wrote in this spirit of the “corny exoticism of such decorative world views as the astonishingly consumable Zen Buddhist one.” These types of irrational and mystical worldviews, Adorno maintained, “simulate a thinking posture” and with “nonconceptual vagary” “heedlessly run off from the subject to the universe.” They consequently suppress the smallest possibilities “of self-reflection by a subject pondering itself and its real captivity.”⁴⁹

Buber’s mature postwar writings express a deeper reservation concerning the monistic and mystical tendencies that he finds expressed in Daoism, Hinduism, and Zen Buddhism.⁵⁰ Such a thinking of a basic unified oneness is criticized from the genuinely relational yet individuating perspective of I and Thou, and of a self and other that cannot be reduced to a “we” or a “one.” Without the nuance and insight of his early interpretation of *Zhuangzi*, Daoism is construed as lacking a genuine sense of the human other and reduced to “mysticism.” Buber described Western and Eastern varieties of mysticism as an escape from the interpersonal human encounter; the primordial ethical reality from which community arises.⁵¹

Akin to Heidegger in this respect, albeit without Heidegger’s language of the history of being, Buber pointed out the need of returning to and reencountering one’s own tradition; it is in this case Jewish spiritual and meditative traditions that should not be forgotten in the desire for an exotic Eastern wisdom. In Buber’s case the deeper encounter with oneself (e.g., one’s own Judaism) can be made possible by the encounter with the other (e.g., Zen Buddhism). In a later essay on Hasidism and Zen Buddhism, Buber narrates a story of how Rabbi

Eizik, the son of Rabbi Yekel, undertook a journey from Krakow to Prague in order to find a treasure. Eizik discovers through a meeting with a Christian in Prague that the treasure he sought is not in Prague but lies beneath his own home in Krakow. It is the encounter with the other (in this case the Christian) that brings one (Eizik) to an understanding of oneself in this Hasidic tale.⁵²

R. J. Zwi Werblowsky reports of an encounter between an American enthusiast, a Zen master, and Buber in Jerusalem that is evocative of Buber's dialogical philosophy and the Chan Buddhist (*chanzong* 禪宗) encounter dialogue (*wenda* 問答):

The American talked, Buber listened, and the Zen master sat in silence. With great verve the American held forth that all religions were basically one, different variations on an identical theme, manifold manifestations of one and the same essence. Buber gave him one of his long, piercing looks, and then shot at him the question: 'And what is the essence?' At this point, the Zen master could not contain himself: he jumped from the seat and with both hands shook the hands of Buber.⁵³

This story, and the story is the highest vehicle of philosophy for Buber, is another illustration of how the interplay, relationality, and mutuality of "I and thou" in dialogue differs from a monological or monistic conceptualization of the world that posits a common underlying essence to philosophy or religion.

Despite Buber's later critical turn with regard to "Eastern mysticism," he did at times recognize once again the moment of I and Thou in Chinese thought. In particular, he remarked of the ultimately humanistic relationship between teacher and discipline in his postwar essay on Hasidism and Zen Buddhism:

Both in Zen and in Hasidism the relationship between teacher and disciple is central. Just as there is no other people in which the corporeal bond of generations has achieved such significance, as in China and Israel, I know of no other religious movement which has to such an extent as Zen and Hasidism connected its view of the spirit with the idea of spiritual propagation. In both, paradoxically man reveres human truth, not in the form of a possession, but in the form of a movement, not as a fire that burns upon the hearth, but, speaking in the language of our time, like the electric spark, which is kindled by contact.⁵⁴

VII. CONCLUSION

The underappreciated German philosopher Helmuth Plessner argued in his essay "Utopia in the Machine" published in 1924 that we cannot escape the machine and the artificial to return to a pure condition of nature:

Escaping from machines and returning to the fields is not possible. They do not release us and we do not release them. With a mysterious power machines are inside us and we are inside them. We have to follow their law until they themselves show us ... the limits of the domination of nature.⁵⁵

Plessner's posing of the problem would shape how twentieth-century German thinkers from the right to the left of the political spectrum responded to the question concerning technology. Buber and Heidegger would not seek to resolve the problem of technological modernity by returning to a bare nature free of the artificial and the human; rather they turned to alternative such as (1) the spiritual cultivation of the person through the dynamic transformations of life and interpersonal dialogue (Buber) or (2) the poetic cultivation of the word in response to the needful, that is, the unnecessary, as a way to release and safeguard the myriad things in a way that is unknown to instrumentalized language and calculative thought (Heidegger). Each thinker would draw on and engage with "Daoist" ideas and images, as they understood them, even as they interpreted them in ways that allowed each to pursue his philosophical project.

As Reinhard May has argued and as we have seen above, Heidegger's reading of Zhuangzi was influenced by Buber, through Buber's edition of the *Zhuangzi*, and likewise shared its noncognitivist, theory-skeptical perspective.⁵⁶ Heidegger's interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* informed his thinking of a poetic dwelling (*wohnen*) of mortals and immortals between earth and sky (the fourfold, *das Geviert*). This dwelling cannot be reduced to the instrumental calculative thinking and limited purposiveness, which Heidegger associated with modern science and technology, if we mortals are indeed to respond to that which is genuinely needful in human existence and dwell poetically in the midst of things. Nonetheless, the historically interconnected yet existentially divergent interpretations of "Lao-Zhuang Daoism" articulated by Buber and Heidegger entail divergent possibilities for spiritually and poetically responding to modernity and its scientific and technological character.

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ENDNOTES

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1. Note that some translations have been modified; in particular, I have updated transliterations to *pinyin* (e.g., “*tao*” has been changed to “*dao*”) except when they are included in the title of a text.
2. For an account of the affinities and differences between Buber and Heidegger, see Haim Gordon, *The Heidegger–Buber Controversy: The Status of the I–Thou* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001). There is little literature devoted to Buber’s philosophy of technology in contrast with the reception of Heidegger’s thinking of technology. On the latter, significant works include Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity—Technology, Politics, Art* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Iain D. Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and, more skeptically, Don Ihde, *Heidegger’s Technologies: Postphenomenological Perspectives* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010). The topic of Heidegger, Daoism, and technology has also been examined in Paul Shih-yi Hsiao, “*Laotse und die Technik*,” in *Die Katholischen Missionen*, 75 (1956): 72–74; Graham Parkes, “Lao–Zhuang and Heidegger on Nature and Technology,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 29, no. 3 (2003):19–38.
3. Martin Buber, *Reden und Gleichnisse des Tschuang Tse* (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1910). Published in English translation in Martin Buber, *Chinese Tales: Zhuangzi, Sayings and Parables and Chinese Ghost and Love Stories*, trans. Alex Page (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1991) and in Jonathan R. Herman, *I and Tao: Martin Buber’s Encounter with Chuang Tzu* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). Buber’s “afterword” (*Nachwort*) to the selections from the *Zhuangzi* is also published in English in Martin Buber, *Pointing the Way: Collected Essays* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1990), 31–58.
4. May emphasizes the importance of the language of Buber’s *Zhuangzi* for Heidegger in Reinhard May, *Heidegger’s Hidden Sources: East Asian Influences on His Work*, trans. Graham Parkes (London: Routledge, 1996), 39–40.
5. Maurice S. Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue* (London: Routledge, 2002), 31.
6. Martin Buber, *Chinesische Geister- und Liebesgeschichten* (Frankfurt am Main: Rütten and Loening, 1911). Published in English in Buber, *Chinese Tales*.
7. Herman, *I and Tao*, 73.
8. *Ibid.*, 72.
9. *Ibid.*, 70–72, 76.
10. Friedman, *Martin Buber*, 32.
11. *Ibid.*, 33.
12. Compare Friedman, *Martin Buber*, 33. Buber later argued that Daoism and his own early “mysticism” did not adequately conceptualize evil, which is more radical than separation from and lack of the unity of life. See Buber, *Pointing the Way*, ix–x.
13. *Ibid.*, 33.
14. Herman, *I and Tao*, 85.
15. David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 305.
16. Herman, *I and Tao*, 86; JeeLoo Liu, *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy: From Ancient Philosophy to Chinese Buddhism* (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 172. On the ecological implications of Lao-Zhuang Daoism, see Eric S. Nelson, “Responding with dao: Early Daoist Ethics and the Environment.” *Philosophy East West*, 59:3 (July 2009): 294–316.
17. Herman, *I and Tao*, 93.

18. The word *Gelassenheit*, frequently translated as “letting releasement,” even appears once in Buber’s edition of the *Zhuangzi*, but without any special significance; Buber, *Reden und Gleichnisse des Tschuang-tse*, 14. Note that “non-doing” and “non-action” are used interchangeably in the translations under consideration. They operate as shorthand for *wuwei* as a comportment that is not bound to the action/passivity dichotomy and a way of being that is letting and responsive rather than coercing and imposing.
19. Martin Buber, “China und wir,” in *Nachlese* (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1965), 205–12. Translation from Buber, *Pointing the Way*, 121.
20. Buber, *Pointing the Way*, 124–25.
21. *Ibid.*, 125.
22. *Ibid.*, 124–25.
23. Martin Buber, “Lao Tzu al hashilton,” *Hapo’el Hatsa’ir* 35 (1942): 6–8. This short piece includes passages from the *Daodejing* concerning government. Buber also discussed Laozi as a political thinker in “Society and the State” (1951), published in English in Buber, *Pointing the Way*, 161–76.
24. See Bret W. Davis, “Heidegger and Asian Philosophy,” in *Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger*, ed. François Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 460–61.
25. Heinrich Wiegand Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger 1929–1976*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 18–19.
26. *Ibid.*, 59, 169.
27. Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe* volume 77 (GA 77): *Feldweg–Gespräche* (1944/45), ed. Ingrid Schüssler (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), 239; Martin Heidegger, *Country Path Conversations*, trans. Bret W. Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 156–57.
28. Martin Heidegger, *Überlieferte Sprache und technische Sprache* (St. Gallen: Erker, 1989), 7–8.
29. Heidegger, GA 77, 220/*Country Path Conversations*, 143.
30. *Ibid.*, 138.
31. *Ibid.*, 149.
32. *Ibid.*, 149.
33. *Ibid.*, 136–37. 76. Also note Martin Heidegger, GA 76 *Leitgedanken zur Entstehung der Metaphysik, der neuzeitlichen Wissenschaft und der modernen Technik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2009), 46–47, 300.
34. Heidegger, GA 77, 230/*Country Path Conversations*, 149–150.
35. Paul Shih-yi Hsiao, “Heidegger and Our Translation of the Tao Te Ching,” *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, ed. Graham Parkes (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 93–101. Compare May, *Heidegger’s Hidden Sources*, 54.
36. Martin Heidegger, GA 75 *Zu Hölderlin/Griechenlandreisen*, ed. Curd Ochwadt (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 43.
37. Martin Heidegger, “Das Ding” (1950), *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954), 161/Heidegger, “The Thing,” *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper Row, 1971), 169.
38. Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 161/*Poetry, Language, Thought*, 170.
39. Translation modified. Martin Heidegger, “Das Wesen der Sprache” (1950), in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1975), 197–98/Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper Row, 1982), 92.
40. Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, 197–98/Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 92.
41. Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 8–9.
42. Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” in *Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. D. F. Krell (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 217.
43. Martin Buber, *The Way of Response*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), 69.
44. Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (London: Routledge, 2002), 204–05.
45. Martin Heidegger, GA 79 *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2005), 93/Martin Heidegger, *Bremen and*

- Freiburg Lectures*, trans. Andrew J. Mitchell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 89.
46. Martin Buber, *Hasidism*, ed. and trans. Maurice Friedman (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1948), 188.
 47. Buber, *Hasidism*, 199–200.
 48. Translation modified from *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers*, ed. G. Neske and E. Kettering, trans. L. Harries (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 62–63. Eric S. Nelson, “Heidegger, Misch, and the Origins of Philosophy,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 39, Supplement (2012): 10–30.
 49. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), 68. Translation modified Despite Adorno’s limits in relation to non-Western philosophy, his approach to the modern ecological crisis remains significant, as I argue in Eric S. Nelson, “Revisiting the Dialectic of Environment: Nature as Ideology and Ethics in Adorno and the Frankfurt School,” *Telos* 155, Summer 2011, 105–26.
 50. Such as expressed in his preface to *Pointing the Way*, ix, in which he is unfair to his own earlier reading of Zhuangzi, and Martin Buber, “One should follow the common,” in *The Knowledge of Man* (New York: Harper Row, 1956), 107–08.
 51. Martin Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man* (New York: Horizon Press, 1958), 254; *Pointing the Way*, ix–x; *The Knowledge of Man*, 107–08.
 52. “Hasidism in the History of Religion,” in Buber, *Hasidism*, 184–200.
 53. Raphael Jehudah Zwi Werblowsky, *Beyond Tradition and Modernity: Changing Religions in a Changing World* (London: Athlone Press, 1976), 115.
 54. Buber, *Hasidism*, 193–94.
 55. Helmuth Plessner, “Die Utopie in der Maschine” (1924), in *Gesammelte Werke* 10 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985), 31–40. Translation modified from Jan–Werner Müller, “The Soul in the Age of Society and Technology: Helmuth Plessner’s Defensive Liberalism,” in *Confronting Mass Democracy and Industrial Technology: Political and Social Theory from Nietzsche to Habermas*, ed. John P. McCormick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 139.
 56. May, *Heidegger’s Hidden Sources*, 39–40.